

What is VIS ?

The International Relations Division of the Faculty of Medicine issues VIS to send out the live messages from International Students of Graduate School of Medicine, Graduate School of Biomedical Science and School of Medicine, and to promote the exchange of intercultural information. We hope VIS helps to cultivate intercultural communications and boost international exchanges.

VISの発行の目的は、医学院・医理工学院・医学部医学科の留学生の生の声を発信することと、異文化間の情報交換を促進することです。VISが異文化間のコミュニケーションを養い、国際交流を実行していくうえで役立つことを望みます。

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From Ludwig-Maximilian-University Munich, Germany



Anna Lomidze

Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Period: February 17 – March 21, 2025

My experience at Hokkaido University Hospital's department of Plastic and Reconstructive surgery was very fulfilling. I have had an interest in the Japanese language for years, and applied for this elective through my university, to get an insight into medical education in Japan.

I was welcomed into the department very nicely, and received guidance from many members of the staff. Every Monday and Friday I got to watch and assist on surgeries, where I learned a lot, since plastic surgery at the Hokkaido University Hospital is quite versatile. During the week, I observed patient interviews and examinations, and every Wednesday there was suture practice, which improved my skills in the operating room. When there was time, the staff often made an effort to introduce me to various aspects of Japan's culture, and made sure I had everything I needed. Dr. Maeda, Dr. Ishikawa, and secretary Mrs. Sawaguchi played an especially big role in that regard, and I am very grateful to them.

Overall, my time at Hokkaido University taught me a lot about plastic surgery, medicine in general, and Japan. In my report for LMU Munich I will definitely recommend Hokkaido University Hospital for future electives. I was sad to leave the department, and I am deeply thankful for everything I was taught, inside and outside of the clinic.

During my recent clinical clerkship at Hokkaido University Hospital, I had the privilege of rotating through the departments of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery as well as Gastroenterological Surgery. This experience was both academically enriching and personally meaningful, offering me valuable insights into Japanese medical practice and hospital culture.

I was fortunate to observe a broad spectrum of surgical procedures and participate in outpatient consultations, deepening my understanding of clinical workflows and surgical decision-making. Particularly memorable were the hands-on skills sessions: a suture class and microsuture training led by Dr. Maeda, whose thoughtful and detailed instruction greatly enhanced my learning.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Maeda and Dr. Watanabe for their generous mentorship and support. I am also deeply thankful to the Japanese medical students for their warm welcome and collegial spirit, which made my stay especially enjoyable.

This clerkship has been a highlight of my medical education, strengthening my passion for surgery and broadening my perspective on global healthcare. I leave with deep appreciation and many unforgettable memories.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.



Bosse Thiel

Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Department of Gastroenterological Surgery I
Period: February 17 – March 21, 2025

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From University of Queensland, Australia

After completing 2 weeks of Nephrology and 2 weeks of Oncology, my experience and knowledge of these medical specialties has vastly improved.

During my placement in Nephrology, I experienced a wide variety of renal based pathology and was also able to improve my clinical skills. In Hokkaido University Hospital, the medical oncology team specialized in rare cancers. My confidence in oncological management has improved, I learned about common chemotherapy regimens, and complications associated with chemotherapy as well as immune related adverse effects (irAE's).

I also attended out-patient clinics in both Nephrology and Oncology. Witnessing the interaction between Japanese doctors and patients was illuminating. I learned that when Japanese doctors communicate with their patients, what is left unsaid is equally as important as what is directly spoken. This stood out to me as a stark contrast to Australian style of communicating. However, my supervisor taught me that this mode of patient communication was informed by Japanese culture and mannerisms. These experiences have greatly influenced my perspective on what is considered culturally safe communication and has refined my own cultural capability.



Nathan Chua

Department of Rheumatology, Endocrinology and Nephrology
Department of Medical Oncology
Period: February 25 – March 21, 2025

From Mahidol University, Thailand



Thanannop Woonwiriakit

Department of Gastroenterological Surgery II
Period: September 30 – October 18, 2024

This is my second time visiting the Department of Gastroenterological Surgery II, Division of Surgery, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the staff who made this elective program possible. I chose this department due to my strong interest in the field of Gastroenterological Surgery, and once again, it has exceeded my expectations.

The staff were, as always, incredibly kind and supportive. They dedicated substantial time to thoroughly explain the vast amounts of information required prior to each procedure. The department primarily focused on two main activities: ward rounds and operations.

During my elective, I had the opportunity to assist in several minor procedures, such as dressing wounds and flushing gastric tubes. Additionally, I performed subcuticular suturing in the operating room under the supervision of Dr. Wada Masataka. The operations during this period were primarily focused around the Hepatopancreatobiliary system, particularly on the pancreas and the system of bile duct. I had the opportunity to observe advanced techniques for tumor resection, which was highly educational.

In conclusion, I look forward to visiting again in the near future, both to revisit this department and to experience the warmth of Hokkaido's people. I am truly grateful for all the invaluable memories and experiences I have gained during this elective.

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

From National University of Singapore, Singapore



Yip Si Ling, Nicole

Department of Gastroenterological Surgery I
Period: April 7 – April 18, 2025

I joined the Hepatobiliary team at Hokkaido University in their rounds and surgery and I think that it was an overall great experience, and I would recommend other international students to join the university to learn. I got to witness many interesting surgeries and hospital cases in the short duration, ranging from liver resections with robotic surgery incorporated to transplant surgeries. It was also beneficial to see how a different country's hospital system functioned and compare its differences from the one in my home country.

I think that it was great that the team in the hospital know some English as it was great for communication. The senior doctors and students are very helpful and kindly translated for me while I was with the team, and they showed me a great amount of hospitality that I am very thankful for. I really felt like I was a member of the team. It was refreshing to see a team of motivated and passionate surgeons and work and it gave me the motivation for my studies. Conversations with the students and the doctors offered my new perspectives and I made many new friendships and learnt more about Japanese culture too.

I had an extremely enjoyable experience during my two weeks here, and the doctors were very friendly and willing to teach. On our first day, we were warmly greeted by Professor Murakami, who energetically gave us an orientation of the hospital. Subsequently, I was introduced to the team and watched a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy on my first day. We even got to meet the dean during our second day. All the doctors knew English (although with varying proficiency levels) and I could understand them well during our interactions. They explained the patients' conditions to me, so that I knew their background before attending the operations. Even the head of department, Dr Hirano Satoshi, gave me some short tutorials despite his busy schedule. The students frequently engaged me in conversation, and one of them even brought us around on the weekends to explore Hokkaido. Shakotan and Cape Kamui were amazing places to visit!

Through the experience, I was able to learn more about the Japanese healthcare system, which contrasted greatly with that of Singapore's. I had plentiful exposure to esophageal, gastric, and pancreatic cancers (as well as benign conditions like intraductal papillary mucinous neoplasms), some of which are rarer in Singapore. There were many opportunities to experience the Japanese culture, and I even had the opportunity to go to an izakaya (a Japanese-style bar) with the team. I would definitely recommended medical students interested in Hokkaido to sign up for this programme!

Lin Chaoxing

Department of Gastroenterological Surgery II
Period: April 7 - April 18, 2025

WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong



Yang Chit Wai, Jeffrey

Department of Cardiovascular Medicine
Period: April 7 – April 25, 2025

I feel honored to have the opportunity to complete a three-week elective in the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine at Hokkaido University Hospital. During which I observed different advanced procedures that I had never seen before and had a once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Back in my university, students may not always get to observe procedures such as TAVI and MitraClip. But at Hokkaido University you get to see them every week, it broadened my horizons on the field of interventional cardiology which is no doubt the core for the future development and advancement of cardiology. The scope of cardiology is also much wider than I expected, I had the opportunity to observe endomyocardial biopsy which is not something I thought I would ever see in this trip!

Other than medicine, another highlight of this elective is the people I met. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the department,

especially the echocardiography team and Toshi-san for not only their teachings, but also for taking care of me throughout my stay! Local students here are also very welcoming and supportive, I would like to thank Chisa for showing us around, the natural scenery of Hokkaido is simply breathtaking. I would also like to express my gratitude towards my fellow elective-mates, Lin, Nicole, Venetia and Lisa for making our journey so fun and memorable. I will never forget all the laughter and memories we shared in Sapporo. I am truly grateful for this precious opportunity and I hope to carry these insights forward in my future journey.

It has been an incredible 3 weeks at the Hokkaido University Hospital! I had the privilege of attaching to three different teams within the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology: IBD, hepatology and chemotherapy, where I was offered an extensive perspective of the practice of digestive and hepatic medicine.

The doctors warmly welcomed me to their teams and ensured that I was up to speed with their daily routine. I observed various procedures such as colonoscopy and RFA. As my Japanese language skills were barely existent, the doctors explained the cases to me in English and drew diagrams to enhance my understanding of the disease pathophysiology. During free time, we would chat about Japanese culture such as cuisine and language, and discuss medical education in Japan.

I would like to express my gratitude towards the doctors for their guidance and support during the elective. Not only have they taught me medical knowledge, they have also shown me how they form strong doctor-patient relationships through open communication and showing empathy. Last but not least, I would like to thank the International Relations Division for facilitating the application process and kindly introducing me to the University. I have enjoyed my time here and it will certainly be an unforgettable part of my medical education!



Ng Wing Tsin, Venetia

Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Period: April 7 – April 25, 2025



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